

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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MENT BY WALTER PAYNE ■
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THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
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DRAMA

VOL. VI

DECEMBER MCMXXVII

NUMBER 3

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

THE BEST NEW PLAYS

By S. R. Littlewood

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OUT of the month's medley of thirty-five new productions, just two plays come to my mind as worthy of afterthought. Each of them suggests in its own way that, however blindly pedants may preach about so-called "technique," it is the spirit that lives. Half the peddling economies which go to make the drama's supposed laws are self-obvious restrictions from the outside. Intrinsically, no good play is less so for being, as "Hamlet" is, the story of a soul, or for having different surrounding people in the first act from those in the last. With someone to pay for the cast and setting, there is no vestige of reason in art why every scene should not provide a new environment, both animate and inanimate, if the spirit demand it.

Of this triumph of the spiritual over material considerations Martinez Sierra's "The Kingdom of God" in the Granville-Barkers' translation at the Strand is, of course, the month's great example. One need not call it a more beautiful play than "The Cradle Song." Enough that it extends itself more into everyday life. As a spiritual play, it may forfeit something thereby. Sister Gracia, with all her agonies, has a picturesque, adventurous time of it. Like Isabella, she is in lively contact with the world. The annual vows of the order of St. Vincent de Paul lend themselves suspiciously to dramatic convenience. The old men of the first act happen to be well-contrasted and arresting characters. That wonderful scene in the maternity-home, where the tempted Sister Gracia and the unrepentant "romantic young lady" go into hysterics together—so beautifully acted

by Miss Gillian Scaife and Miss Kathleen O'Regan—has its concessions to colour. So also has that with the flamboyant boy-picador at the orphanage. I feel sure there must be a "kingdom of God" which is deeper than all this. What I should like to see from Sierra now is a treatment of spiritual experience under far sterner conventual discipline—something corresponding to the complete immolation which ends Hroswitha's "Paphnutius" upon a note of ecstatic joy. But compared with average trash, how exquisitely sensitive and sympathetic a piece of work.

The other "spiritual" play—light-hearted though it be, and boxed round at every point by the practical expediences of the theatre—is "The Red Umbrella," so promptly and deservedly promoted from Kew to the Little. Miss Brenda Girvin and Monica Cosens have called this delightful little comedy a "fantasy." For such purpose, its wings have had to be very much clipped—indeed, its authoresses must give profound thanks to the intensity and beauty of Miss Jean Forbes-Robertson's personality for being able to convey even roughly the "fayness" of their heroine. One does not believe it at first—how could one with all those stage-chattels about?—and by the time one does believe it the comedy tric-trac and commonplace folk have captured the story. However, Miss Girvin and Miss Cosens prove so clever at this that they win through none the less, and what really saves the play from regret is the gaiety and laughter and happy turn of the ending from a wholly mortal point of view. So we have a fairy caught in a

THE BEST NEW PLAYS

comedy. Since she is not too much of a fairy, and since the comedy is quite charming, that she should settle down to become a middle-aged doctor's wife need not break our hearts.

Some plays of the month—Mr. Noel Coward's "Home Chat," for instance—we can only forget and forgive. Among acting

achievements I would note the Shylock of Mr. Lewis Casson in the "Old Vic." revival of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Lyric, Hammersmith—true in character, not overdone, sympathy growing naturally out of sardonic comedy and forfeited at the right moment—to put it tritely, the "Jew that Shakespeare drew."

THE LAW AND ENTERTAINMENT

By Walter Payne, O.B.E.

Barrister-at-Law

IT would be agreeable if those who take an active interest in the stage, the writing of plays, in acting and in the construction and control of theatres could peacefully pursue a very entertaining art free from all thought of the law. Humanity, however, being what it is, cannot even in such a sphere escape the penalties of its own shortcomings. And so it comes about there is a necessity that gentlemen learned in the law should write books upon the Theatre and Public Entertainment to inform us of our rights, our wrongs and our obligations and to make us realize how cautiously we must proceed, even when in pursuit of an art, whether as dramatic authors, actors or as mere managers.

The most recent and to my mind the best work on the subject hitherto published, is that of Mr. Sidney C. Isaacs* and contains much that, in the words of Mr. Justice McCardie, who writes an appreciative Foreword, "will be of great service not only to the legal profession, but to the theatrical and allied professions also." The learned judge points out too that special statutes, special regulations and special customs

must often be considered. How true this is those alone know whose life is actively spent in providing public entertainment.

Mr. Isaacs' book is well arranged and very comprehensive. It should be read particularly by superficial critics of the Theatre; those for example who sometimes think disparagingly of the "stage" as a calling or profession and by those "lofty" ones who believe that managers who seek to combine a knowledge and instinct for business with a well-balanced sense of what is praiseworthy in the Drama must be bad men deserving to be sent, like the common players of interludes in the days of good Queen Anne, "whither they ought to be sent."

There are many branches of the law which affect in some way or other the many activities which are involved in connexion with entertainment, and he who writes of Law in relation to the Theatre must be familiar with many branches of the general law. It is a sad reflection that one cannot as in olden days light-heartedly select a site and erect on it any kind of shanty where players may act or a small band of enthusiasts pursue the delights of writing, producing and acting dramatic pieces. The construction of all places of entertainment is most rigidly controlled as those who may be sufficiently ambitious to build a theatre will find if they glance

**Law of Theatres, Music-halls, Cinemas, etc.* By Sidney C. Isaacs, B.A., LL.B., of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law. Stevens and Sons, Ltd. £1.

THE LAW AND ENTERTAINMENT

at Mr. Isaacs' work: and the Lord Chamberlain, as is known, exercises in relation to plays a difficult jurisdiction with impressive and baffling skill. Even when your theatre is built you will find the conduct of it is subject to many conditions and various regulations all known to a sturdy and pertinacious band of officials who patrol places of amusement seeking out sin in much the same way as constables patrol the public thoroughfares. Then you will learn if you are a writer or newspaper proprietor to be careful not to publish the photograph of an actress with the title "The Whitsun Girl" for it has been held to be defamatory of her character, for the peculiar reason that you suggest she is the type of woman who might be "picked up" by a man on his Whitsun holiday!

You may have suffered too from the irritating habit of artists who bob in and out of the tableau curtains taking—to you—countless (but to them carefully counted) "calls" and unburden your soul by writing that the artist has taken more "encores" than he or she was entitled to! Such a way of giving relief to your feelings may cost you money, for that is a libellous statement. There are valuable chapters on tenancies of theatres as well as upon the making and construction of contracts, and upon the rights and liabilities of managers and performers towards one another and as between managers and audiences. There are in addition useful appendices containing relevant and useful Acts relating to licensing, copyright and forms of contract.

The only appendix which will not perhaps be found of great utility to-day, although historically very important, is the Variety Artists Award of 1919. This followed the original Award of 1907 of Mr. (now Lord) Askwith. In its day it was the Magna Charta of the music-hall manager and artist. In fact so

good an award was it (notwithstanding my own substantial share in its compilation) that it brought after a strike a stability in the conduct of business and a degree of peace to the music-hall industry which the Treaty of Versailles and the Pact of Locarno together, with all their glamour, will not bring to the greater world of which authors, actors, managers, film stars and others are merely a humble part.

In fact there is little if anything left out that the manager, the artist, the author or the composer will require to know about, in a general way in relation to his particular sphere of activity.

There are even sections upon the iniquitous Entertainments Duty that I hope will become at an early date also of merely historical interest and be omitted as redundant from future editions.

Altogether a most useful text-book for those who represent the many millions of capital involved in modern entertainment enterprise and for all those very many others whose co-ordination is essential to its success.

We wish to call special attention to the announcement appearing in our advertisement columns of the second Easter School for amateur producers which will be held for a fortnight from April 11 to 25 at King's College, Kensington, W. We note that Drama Schools (several of them assisted by the League) are also being held in Hertfordshire, Kent, Lincolnshire, Sussex and elsewhere. The School in London should specially appeal to those residing near the metropolis and also to those engaged in educational work who will find that the period of the School coincides with the School holidays.

On Thursday, December 29, the Drama League will hold a meeting at the Conference of Educational Associations, University College, Gower Street, at 5.30 p.m. The subject will be "Oral Tests and the Speaking of English." All members of the Drama League admitted free.

REPORT OF THE AUTHORS' FEES COMMITTEE

Pursuant to the resolution passed at the Autumn Conference, 1926, the Council appointed the following as a Committee:—Mr. Harley Granville-Barker (chairman), Mrs. Corner, Mr. Sidney H. Crowther, Mr. Ashley Dukes, Mr. St. John Ervine, Miss Gaskell (Rep. the Nat. Fedn. of Women's Institutes), Dr. L. du Garde Peach, Mr. Harold Rubinstein and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, giving them the following reference:

1. To make a statement as to the precise situation at the moment.

2. To report on the legal aspect of the matter.

3. To make some recommendations to deal with the matter.

1 and 3 were more conveniently dealt with together.

2. The Committee asked Mr. Harold F. Rubinstein (who is professionally qualified to do so) to draw up this part of the report. He most kindly relieved his fellow members of this much of their task.

Under the Copyright Act, 1911, a dramatic author or his assigns acquires the exclusive performing rights in his plays from the date of the requisite form of "publication," for the period of his life and for fifty years after, or, in the case of posthumous works, for fifty years from the date of first publication. No play in respect of which copyright subsists may be performed publicly without the licence of the author or other owner of the copyright and such owner is at liberty to dispose of his rights whether to professionals or amateurs on such terms as he may think fit, as with other kinds of property. For these purposes, there is no distinction in law between professionals and amateurs; but, by what one may call a custom of the trade it has been the practice for authors and their agents to deal with professionals on the basis of a sliding-scale percentage on the gross takings, with a lump sum on account, paid in advance (this is commonly called the Royalty system), and to grant licences for public performances by amateurs on a flat-rate basis, usually one or two guineas per performance for one-act plays, and three or five guineas per performance for a full length play. There is some uncertainty as to the meaning of the word "public" as applied to amateur performances organized under certain conditions, and it is known that plays are frequently performed by amateurs without any licence from the author. The performance may not come to the author's knowledge; if it should there may still be the question whether it was a public performance within the meaning of the law. The persons technically responsible for these perform-

ances actually run the risk of being called upon to pay, in lieu of the author's ordinary fees, such damages as the Court may award for infringement of his copyright plus the costs of legal proceedings. On the other hand, as was explained in the opinion of Mr. E. J. MacGillivray published in the October, 1924, issue of *DRAMA*, it is, in the present state of the law, impossible to lay down a hard and fast rule governing every class of performance; the actual constitution of the audience in each particular instance, in so far as the facts can be proved to the satisfaction of the Court, providing the test of its public or private character, as the case may be. Apart from the merits of the question, therefore, it would appear to be in the interests of all parties concerned to agree, if possible, upon a definite basis of fees applicable to all performances of plays by amateur bodies of any status.

H. F. RUBINSTEIN.

3 (and 1).—The demand for a Royalty system of payment comes, in the main, from two quite opposite directions:—

(a) From small village or industrial societies who cannot expect to cover the usual flat-rate fee by their receipts.

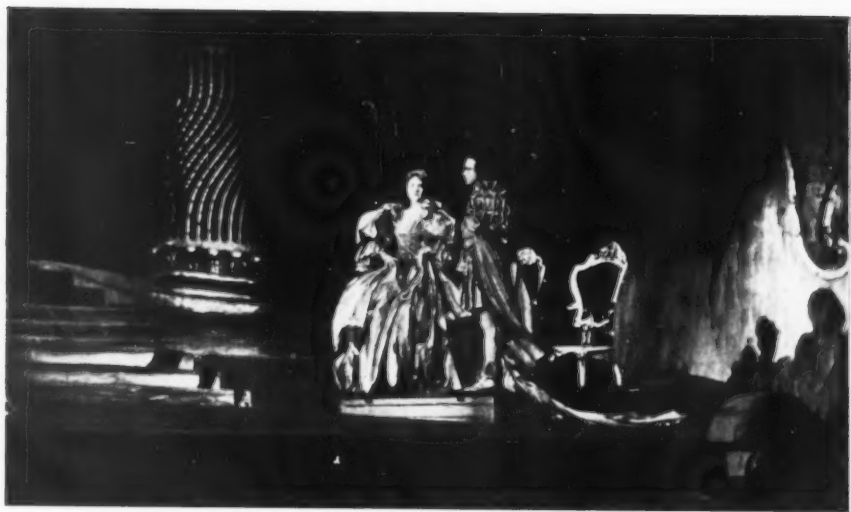
(b) From large organizations who are accustomed to produce plays for several consecutive nights and in circumstances which approximate in many respects to those of the professional theatre.

Between these two extremes there are undoubtedly societies able and sometimes content to pay the usual flat-rate fee, but many of these, even, will hesitate before committing themselves to a payment which may amount to as much as five guineas per performance. It is not a question of grudging the author payment for his work. The overwhelming majority of amateur societies to-day have no reserves and no financial backing.

The Committee believe that a percentage scheme, no matter how high the agreed percentage, would meet the requirements of societies in class (a) because no matter how small the audience for any play, a society would then be sure that there would at least be something left over for the expenses of the production, while they would not run the risk of being called upon to pay the author more than the gross receipts of the performance.



"THE KINGDOM OF GOD BY SIERRA." THE ORPHAN-
AGE KITCHEN. STAGE SETTING BY JAMES WHALE.
EXECUTED BY FRANCIS BULL. FOR THE RECENT
PRODUCTION BY A. E. FILMER AT THE STRAND
THEATRE



A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. THE PALACE OF
THESEUS. PROF. REINHARDT'S PRODUCTION AT
SALZBURG. AUGUST, 1927.

AUTHORS' FEES COMMITTEE REPORT

In practice, however, it is impossible to divide amateur societies into classes; it is becoming, indeed, increasingly difficult to distinguish amateurs from professionals. Any scheme of payment, therefore, to be workable must be of general application; and the simpler it is the better. The Committee submits the following scheme as one to which societies and dramatists might, with marked advantage, adhere.

Gross receipts.	Royalty payments Percentage.		Maximum amount payable.
Up to £5 ...	30%	...	£1 10 0
Up to £10 ...	25%	...	£2 10 0
Up to £15 ...	23½%	...	£3 10 0
Up to £20 ...	22½%	...	£4 10 0
Up to £25 ...	20%	...	£5 0 0
Up to £30 ...	16½%	...	£5 0 0
Up to £40 ...	12½%	...	£5 0 0

Above £40 12½% on the first £40, and 10½% upon all receipts in excess.

When two or more performances of the same play are given within the space of seven days and the gross takings exceed £40, the *percentage upon the excess* may be calculated upon the receipts as a whole.

In every case gross receipts to be reckoned exclusive of Entertainments Tax.

The amount to be paid on one-act plays to be one-third of the Royalty appropriate to full-length plays.

An objection hitherto urged by authors to the adoption of a Royalty system has been the lack of an easy and accurate method of checking production receipts. To obviate this the Committee recommend as an essential part of the scheme that societies contracting in to it should pay to the Drama League an annual fee of one guinea, the money thus collected being used for the expenses of collecting the fees and of guaranteeing the returns.

This collection would be supervised by the British Drama League, who would then pass the fees to the authors or their agents *without any deduction*.

The books of all contracting societies would be open to inspection by the author concerned, or his agent.

All contracting societies to be affiliated with the British Drama League.

Societies should contract in year by year. A year's notice of withdrawal should be given. Authors would place specified plays (not necessarily all their plays) upon the

panel and would be at liberty (due notice being given) to withdraw them.

The Committee suggests that the scheme should be put into operation when not less than one hundred societies have contracted in to it, and when (in the opinion of the Drama League Council) a sufficient number of plays have been put upon the panel.

Mr. St. John Ervine was unable to attend the meetings of the Committee. Upon the circulation of the draft report, he stated that he could not in principle agree to it, though he regarded the scheme as an equitable one, if the royalty scheme itself were admitted. This disagreement apart, the report was passed unanimously by the Committee.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY REVIVALS

To the Editor of DRAMA

SIR,—Would you kindly allow me to appeal through your columns for information as to revivals of some eighteenth-century plays upon which I am working? They are Lillo's "The London Merchant" (George Barnwell), Moore's "The Gamester," Holcroft's "The Road to Ruin," Lewis's "The Castle Spectre," Cumberland's "The West Indian," Inchbald's "I'll Tell you What," Fielding's "The Tragedy of Tragedies, or Tom Thumb" (the play, not the opera), Rowe's "Jane Shore," Addison's "Cato," Steele's "The Conscious Lovers," Garrick and Colman's "The Clandestine Marriage" and Gay's "The Beggar's Opera." I should be most grateful for any information as to performances of these plays by professionals or amateurs, which have been given since 1900, and especially of performances by strolling companies, some of which, I have heard, still harrow village audiences with "George Barnwell." At present my list includes only the revivals by Mr. Playfair and Professor Nicoll, and those recorded by Mr. Harold Child in "The Review of English Studies."

Yours faithfully,

JOHN HAMPDEN

Chalgrove Cottage, Burpham Court,
Guildford.

A TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY

THE Programme of the *Matinée* given at the Scala on November 7, to celebrate the coming of age of the Central School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, illustrated the whole history of the work of the school. It opened with a short Mime, played by Miss Irene Mawer who, after her training, devoted herself with Miss Ruby Ginner to the development of the movement side of the School's work. The second scene showed Miss Sybil Thorndike and Mr. Lewis Casson in the trial scene from the "Winter's Tale," with Mr. Henry Oscar as Leontes. The third play, "Portrait of a Gentleman in Slippers," by A. A. Milne, was produced by Mr. Athole Stewart, who was so long a dramatic director of the Central School. It was played by a group of old students. After a brief interval in which the results of the *Matinée*—a profit of over £300 for the Scholarship fund—were announced by Mr. Lee Mathews, there came a translation of one of Prosper Merimee's comedies by Gilbert Wakefield, in which Mr. Leslie Faber and Miss Edith Evans appeared in delightfully contrasted parts. The programme concluded with one of the old Guignol plays "Cupboard Love," by Elliott Crawshaw Williams, played by Marda Vanne, Margot Sieveking and James Raglan. Between the acts Mabel Constanduros, so well known to "listeners in," recited one of her inimitable sketches. H.R.H. Princess Louise honoured the *Matinée* with her presence and remained to the very end of the programme.

The next day the Speech Conference organized by the teacher section of the School, who came from all over England, Scotland, and Ireland for the birthday celebrations, was opened. In all, about 200 members took part, Germany was represented by Prof. Flatau; France, by M. Manchon of the Institut Francais, and M. Emile Drain, who came expressly from the Comedie Francaise as representative of the Societe Universalle du Theatre, and Italy, by Mrs. Cimino King. A most memorable speech on the first day was that of Dr. W. A. Aikin who opened the Conference by a statement of the phonological principles of speech. The second day's programme brought the unexpected pleasure

of Mr. Drain's magnificent speech, in which he reviewed the differences between the English and French Theatres, and attributed the more rhetorical character of French dramatic speech to the predominance of literary interests at a time when the French theatre came into being, contrasted with the freer atmosphere of the Elizabethan stage. On the afternoon of the same day the Conference accomplished what was perhaps the most important part of its deliberations. A large audience including representatives of all levels of education in England, passed a resolution in favour of the institution of an optional oral test in English in the first public examination recognized by the Board of Education. The motion will be reported to the Examination Boards. It is hoped, through the kindness of the Drama League, to have a further discussion on the whole subject on December 29 at 5 o'clock, at the Conference of Educational Associations.

On the Thursday morning Mrs. Matthey and Miss Gullan put forward a scheme for the establishment of a Verse Speaking Association, and before the meeting was concluded, representatives from Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, Dublin, Newcastle and Folkestone and other places, had expressed their willingness to establish branches and undertake the necessary work of organization. In the afternoon Dr. Aikin, Miss Elsie Fogerty, Mr. Acton-Bond, Madame Kirkby Lunn, Miss Klemantaski and Mrs. Cimino-King spoke on the need for æsthetic standard, combining the elements necessary for speech, song, diction and oratory. The next day Mr. Harcourt Williams took the preliminary tests of a Verse Speaking competition organized by the Association of Teachers of Speech Training trained at the Central School. Nearly 200 candidates entered. The tests were concluded on Saturday by Mr. John Masefield. Mr. Masefield paid a tribute to the work done in the past by the Central School, and said that all those associated with the Oxford Recitations felt the value of such a school of verse-speaking which worked to carry out the ideals which poets themselves felt needful in the art of diction. The first prize was won by Miss Sylvia Talbot, a pupil of Channing House School, and Miss Hilda Brettell.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

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Telephone: GERRARD 8011.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

NO excuse is needed for the large amount of space which we have given in this number to accounts of the Drama League Conference at Manchester and its attendant celebrations. Nearly 100 delegates took part in the meetings, and it will be seen that much business was transacted and that several important decisions were arrived at. The sub-committee's Report on Authors' Fees was passed without dissentients, and the Council of the League in its turn has given its ratification. Now it remains to bring the scheme to the notice of dramatists and to invoke their co-operation. The question of the League's financial responsibility for British teams entering the American Little Theatre Tournament has also been considered by the Council, and consequent on Mr. Purdom's

resolution at the Conference it has been decided that the League shall no longer act officially on the invitation of the American Committee. This, of course, will not prevent any individual society from entering the American Tournament should an invitation be forthcoming, but it must do so on its own responsibility and not in the name of the Drama League.

All members of the Drama League will have been rejoiced at the news in regard to the fund for the new Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford. The *Daily Telegraph* is indeed to be congratulated on the happy result of its endeavours. In less than two years the magnificent total of over £200,000 has been raised. A large proportion of this sum has come from America. Great Britain must at least equal the munificence from overseas, and if that is done not only the building of a new Theatre but a proper endowment for its Company will be assured. It is to be hoped that an architectural plan worthy of the occasion, and of the generosity of Shakespeare lovers, will result from the competition for designs. Without prejudging the issue, we also trust that the Memorial Committee is not committed to the acceptance of any design which is not first rate.

As we go to press Area adjudications in the National Festival of Community Drama will be in full swing. The dates of the six Area Finals are as follows:—Bristol, Friday, December 9 (afternoon); Birmingham, December 9 (evening); Liverpool, December 10; Glasgow, December 14; London, December 16; and Leeds, December 17. Mr. E. A. Baughan, with the concurrence of the *Daily News*, has very kindly consented to judge the Area Finals and to be one of the three judges in the National Festival in London in the New Year. The Scottish Area Final at Glasgow will be judged by Mr. William Armstrong.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

- The Crowd.* By Helen Gordon. *A Good Shepherd.* By Ida Gandy. *The Tall, Tall Castle.* By Margaret Macnamara. Williams. 1s. each.
- Their Angels.* By V. A. Pearn. *The Beaten Track.* By J. O. Francis. French. 2s. 6d. each.
- The Judge of All Earth.* By Stephen Schofield. Labour Publishing Co. 1s.
- Four Plays.* By Serafin and Joaquin Quintero, in English versions by Helen and Harley Granville-Barker. Sidgwick and Jackson. 7s. 6d.
- The Curtain Goes Up.* By the Earl of Lathom. Secker. 7s. 6d.

SOMEbody has just been telling me rather crossly that my interest in the drama is of a purely selfish kind. That was because I had complained a little plaintively about an unhappy evening spent watching some inexperienced amateurs do dreadful things to a Greek tragedy when they might easily have given a quite satisfying performance of some lesser play more within their scope. But this, I was told, was a purely selfish way to look at the matter. I should have thought less of my own enjoyment—or lack of it—and more of the ennobling influence which acting a Greek tragedy, however badly, was having upon the actors. I do not doubt the ennobling effect upon the actors, but I can see no possible justification whatsoever for expecting an audience to pay for the privilege of assisting these actors in the process of ennobling themselves when there is no compensating artistic enjoyment to be derived from the ceremony. This selfish and arrogant lack of any responsibility towards the audience is becoming increasingly obvious among amateur societies, and especially among those run by people who talk a great deal about the value of drama as "a social force." I wish these enthusiasts would realize that the drama is essentially a collaboration between actors and audience, and that an amateur society, especially in a small town or village, should exist as much for the sake of the audience as of the actors. The ideal amateur plays are those which are within the capabilities of the actors and are at the same time good enough plays on their own merits to give intelligent pleasure to the audience. You may protest that it is hard to find plays of this sort to fit the needs of comparatively inexperienced societies; if so, with a triumphant flourish I call your attention to the first three plays in "The Village Play Series" which is being issued in association with the Drama League. If the series lives up to the standard of suitability, originality and quality set by these three plays, it should have an enormous influence on the development of the small amateur companies.

I suppose "The Crowd" is not really a play at all—though I confess I am very vague about what is a play. Anyway, this is simply a faithful reproduction of what anybody might see during a few minutes spent watching the crowd in a big railway station. But although it is what anybody might see, it is seen as only somebody with a very keen and

understanding observation might see it. On the stage it should be easy and effective provided any suspicion of farce or overplaying is avoided. "A Good Shepherd" is a beautifully finished piece of craftsmanship in its economy, simplicity, and restraint. It requires little "acting" in the ordinary sense of the word, but the emotional effect of the play is far greater than could have been achieved by methods making more demands upon the actors. But of these three plays it is "The Tall, Tall Castle" which is most perfectly suited to the needs of a village company, for it is the sort of play which can be done very much better by amateurs than professionals, and best of all by inexperienced and unsophisticated amateurs. In other words, it is a mime play. Nowadays mime is looked upon as something rather precious and "arty-crafty," but this vigorous and gloriously comic entertainment should do much to rout that superstition.

The next three plays on the list are further examples of plays admirably suitable for amateurs, as they depend for their effect mainly on directness, simplicity and sincerity rather than upon subtleties of character and emotion. I am not one of those people who for some obscure reason imagine that simplicity and sincerity in acting are the monopoly of the amateur; a professional cast could, of course, easily perform these plays to perfection; but so could amateurs; they are plays which do not need professional acting. "The Beaten Track" is a Welsh play, but as it is not aggressively so, there is no reason why it should be performed only by Welsh companies. "Their Angels" is described as "a modern miracle play for children," but it is not. A play about children is not necessarily a play for children. I suspect that children might vote "Our Angels" rather tame, but grown-ups in not too sophisticated mood should find it charming. "The Judge of All Earth" is the sort of play of which there are not nearly enough. Writers of one-act plays still have to rely mainly on amateurs for production, but they have not yet awakened to the fact that there is no longer any need for them to limit themselves so severely to subjects requiring only the most ordinary and conventional settings. Any competent amateur society knows how to "suggest" imaginative settings, so I hope lots of authors are going to follow Mr. Schofield's example and write one-acters which gain their effect by making full use of the resources of the theatre, appealing dramatically to the eye as well as the ear.

Finally, some plays which really do take some acting, as to a large extent they depend on the style on the lightness and poise of the dialogue. In spite of Mr. Granville-Barker's assurance that the Quintero plays "have lost terribly in translation," I find it hard to believe that in the original these charming, fragmentarily sentimental plays can possibly have dialogue more exquisitely graceful and delicate than that of the English version. Lord Lathom's plays are extremely good theatre, but nothing more. But even in print there is an enormous amount of pleasure to be derived from the sheer efficiency of the writing.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE AUTUMN CONFERENCE

THE annual conference of the British Drama League opened in Manchester on Friday, October 28. In the afternoon delegates attended exhibitions at the John Rylands Library and the Central Reference Library, Piccadilly; and after that they were received by the Lord Mayor (Alderman J. H. Swales) at the Mosley Street Art Gallery. Mr. Alec L. Rea and Mr. R. Miller thanked the Lord Mayor for his hospitality on behalf of the Drama League and of the Manchester Playgoers.

The exhibition in the Rylands Library aimed at showing the delegates something of Shakespeare and his environment. Four folios of the poet's works were laid out on the centre of the table, and round about were grouped contemporary copies of the kind of books he was likely to have read and used for reference. There was an edition of Chaucer current in his day—and what more likely, Dr. Guppy asked in expounding the books, than that Shakespeare had a copy of it on his shelves? Spenser and Sidney, Montaigne and a translation of Pliny, the Voyages of Hakluyt, and the Chronicles of Holinshed and Froissart—all these things were there in rare and lovely editions, and Dr. Guppy tantalized his hearers by telling them of what was not there but might have been there. The library, had, for example, he said, school-books which Shakespeare might have used at the Stratford Grammar School, "and you will probably be surprised to learn that one of these school primers is written by Cardinal Wolsey."

The delegates were shown in other rooms a large number of histories of the drama in different countries, and works dealing with stagecraft in general. An interesting item in this collection was a set of seventeen scrap-books in which Miss Horniman has preserved all press references to the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, and the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

The Exhibition at the Reference Library was more concise in scope, dealing only with the history of the Drama in Manchester. One was able to trace the whole

course of the stream, from the time when the Old Exchange was first used as a theatre in the middle of the eighteenth century, right through the times of the theatre in Marsden Street, which opened in 1753, the Queen's Theatre in Spring Gardens, built in 1790, and the Theatre Royal—which was first in Fountain Street and afterwards in Peter Street. One was able to see something, too, of the personalities as well as the buildings. Every famous actor and actress of the last half-century appeared at the Theatre Royal, and Irving, of course, was there for nearly five years.

THE AMATEUR'S PLACE IN THE THEATRE MR. BASIL DEAN'S TRIBUTE

In the evening a public meeting was held in the Lesser Free Trade Hall. Mr. Basil Dean, who presided, said there was no doubt that the Drama League had achieved, and was in process of achieving, a tremendous thing in this country by co-ordinating the efforts of all those who, whether they were obtaining their livings by the exercise of their talents in dramatic art, or whether they were, in an amateur sense, doing what they could to further that art, had some sincerity behind their efforts. It was also promoting a healthy understanding between the amateur and the professional, which was an extremely important thing.

The professional theatre drew its chief sustenance from the amateur—not only the amateur actor and the amateur producer, but from the amateur manager. It was to men like Sir Barry Jackson and Mr. Alec Rea, the treasurer of the League, that the so-much derided commercial theatre of London owed the best work of the last ten years. Not only that but this affiliation between amateur and professional led to a closer understanding which was imperative, because, nowadays, whether we liked it or not, the amateur was doing much of the work which the professional theatre would like to do, but under present commercial conditions could not afford to do. Therefore it was very desirable that there should be a good understanding and that the

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professional should no longer raise his eyebrows and assume that the amateur performer was merely concerned in a process of social and personal glorification, but was really concerned with advancing the art of the theatre and the interest of the public in that theatre, which was possibly an even more important thing.

"I should like this meeting," continued Mr. Dean, "to consider with us carefully to-night the possibility of taking the foundation of a civic theatre for Manchester as your immediate object. It was my privilege at the beginning of this year to start a certain hare in this town which, unlike certain hares recently imported here, appears to be still running. At all events its fuses are still efficient and the greyhounds of official discouragement and official worry have not scotched it yet and, I think, if I know the Manchester Playgoer's Club and Mr. Doran, neither of these particular animals will succeed in killing this particular hare. First of all, the existence of the Drama League and its 1,200 affiliated societies is, to my mind, an indication of the fact that the commercial theatre is moribund, for those societies are mainly concerned with working out problems which the serious professional man knows perfectly well he ought really to be at work upon himself, and I suggest to you that all these societies all over the country are, by their very existence, a criticism of the ordinary affairs theatrical of England to-day."

Manchester, continued Mr. Dean, was not a beautiful city, but what attractions could be added to its civic life if the municipality supported a notable theatre in its midst.

"You know," said Mr. Dean, "there is no excuse for Manchester in this matter, because owing to the courage and public enterprise of one woman years ago you had some indication of what can be done by a theatre with a public conscience. I suggest that the existence of the publicly-constituted theatres is vital because I believe that they can do something to form a bulwark against the increasing Americanisation of our country. The Government, egged on by the newspapers, have done something for the films. Why cannot a municipality do something, however little, for something

which is even more vital?" But they must be quick about it. If they did not hurry up the English theatre would be completely Americanized.

THE THEATRE HABIT.

Mr. Ivor Brown said the difficulty they had to fight in this country was that they had no great theatrical tradition, by which he meant that during the last century and, to certain extent, during the century before, the tradition of going to the theatre as the normal part of a civilized life died away. People went to the theatre for a special occasion. There was no genuine national hunger for the theatre. The Puritan tradition had many great qualities but in certain forms it took on an excessive distrust of normal entertainment, and it fixed upon the theatre as one of the forms.

People sometimes would not believe the strength and persistence of that objection to theatre-going. Mr. Brown mentioned the case of the young daughter of a clergyman who was not permitted to go with a friend to see "Hamlet." Instead they were encouraged to go out to see a film called "Her Heart Aflame." (Laughter.) It was an astounding state of affairs.

Abroad, at any rate in certain countries, the theatre was accepted as a normal institution, like books, pictures or anything else and not kept for a special occasion. Nearly all cities had public bowling greens, tennis courts, swimming baths, etc., but there was a sort of idea that it was no business of the organized community to have anything to do with the theatre.

Mr. F. E. Doran described at length a scheme for the foundation of a Civic Theatre in Manchester. If the site were provided by the City Authorities, the theatre would be built by public subscription, and handed over as a gift to the Corporation in a certain number of years. Mr. Doran was confident of the success of the scheme if all would work together. (See also page 46.)

Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth pointed out that Civic or National Theatres, no less than public baths and libraries, had to be thrust upon an, at first, unwilling public, who later on would learn to appreciate what had been given them by those more far-sighted than themselves.

THE AUTUMN CONFERENCE

Minutes of the Meeting of Delegates

The Conference was held at the Lesser Free Trade Hall on October 29, 1927, at 10.30 a.m. Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth in the chair

Minutes of the last Meeting.

The Chairman recapitulated the proceedings at the last Conference in London. He explained that the list of plays for schools which it had been decided to draw up, had not been compiled owing to the existence of a list prepared by the Village Drama Society. He explained that negotiations were in progress for closer association with the Village Drama Society, and he hoped that when this had been arranged the list would be available to members of both Societies.

The Minutes were then signed.

1. Resolution moved by Mr. C. B. Purdom, of the Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society:

That if the British Drama League is to continue to act on the invitation of the American Little Theatre Tournament to select a company of British Players as representative of the Amateur Players of this Country to take part in the Tournament, the League should assume responsibility for the costs involved.

Mr. Purdom, in moving the resolution, stated that his Society had sent a Company of players to America at the invitation of the British Drama League. It was not reasonable, he submitted, for the League to accept the invitation without taking full financial responsibility for its action. For a team of amateurs to visit America involved considerable expense, in time and effort no less than in money. The official cost of sending the Welwyn team of three players last May was £500, and the whole of this had to be raised by the Society. In addition, of course, there was inevitably a considerable cost falling on the individuals composing the team. He was aware that the resolution raised the whole question whether the invitation of the American Little Theatre movement should be accepted at all. The visit to America this year was a very enjoyable experience, yet he confessed that on thinking the thing over he was not quite sure whether it was worth the effort. A good many societies could not contemplate such a visit to America, even if they were selected to go. The present arrangement was that if the team placed first was unable to go then the second should be sent, and if not the second the third. He thought this system wrong. If there was no reasonable possibility of the first team going, the whole question should be reconsidered. It had not, in his opinion, been sufficiently considered by the Council of the League.

The motion was seconded by Mr. P. Ahier of the Huddersfield Thespians, whose team was selected for the visit to America last year with Mr. Sladen Smith's play "St. Simeon Stylites." The eight players visited Toronto also, and the total cost to the Society was £800.

Mr. F. Sladen Smith (Manchester Unnamed Society) supported the motion as one of the very few people who had held that the new festival

plan which the League had forced upon them was of very doubtful value. The American difficulty was, perhaps, the chief example of its unwisdom, but even if this were abolished then there would be others. The difficulties, financial and others, of sending a team to America were so great, Mr. Sladen Smith went on, that they raised a new problem for authors. It meant that they were not necessarily sending the very best play; they were sending a good play which by a series of miracles, would be able to go to America without ruining everyone concerned. What chance had the authors unless they bore all these impossible conditions in mind in writing their plays? This wretched American business, he concluded, was going to bar out half the good plays.

Mr. Alec Rea, the Honorary Treasurer of the League, stated that there was nothing the League would like better to do than to finance these American visits; but it was impossible. The League's membership was about 3,000, and every penny of its subscriptions was needed for current expenses. He considered that it was the League's duty to organize Festivals, but not to finance them. He also questioned the wisdom of using money for financing American visits rather than more generally useful projects, such as increased Library facilities, etc.

The Chairman pointed out that though the first competition was definitely held to select a team for America, the Festival idea had become popular in itself, and the second Festival was organized without specific reference to the American contest. In 1926 it had been stated that the winning team would have the option of going to America, but this year's rules for the Festival made no mention at all of America.

Mr. M. F. K. Fraser (Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation) supported the resolution.

The Rev. Harold Hastings (Lancaster Footlights Club) suggested a levy of 10s. on each Society to meet expenses.

Mr. Hirst (Hon. Secretary, North Western Area) opposed the motion.

Mr. Ivor Brown pointed out that there was no obligation on the winning team to go to America and that therefore there should be no obligation on the part of the League to pay the expenses. He opposed the resolution.

Mrs. Rogers (Clifton Arts Club and Folk House Players) opposed the motion on the ground that the money could be used to very much better purpose.

The resolution, on being put to the vote, was carried by 36 votes to 9.

2. The following resolution was moved by Mr.

M. F. K. Fraser (Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation), and seconded by Miss E. M. Jones:

That whenever it may be necessary for the British Drama League to define an amateur the definition shall be: "An amateur is a person who does not habitually earn his living on the professional stage; who is not under contract to perform with any professional company during

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the period to which this definition applies, and receives no payment for his services in respect of any performance for which this definition is necessary."

In moving this resolution Mr. Fraser gave a number of instances in which otherwise suitable persons were debarred from the Festival by the existing rule which is: "Entrants must consist of amateurs in the usual meaning of the word—that is persons who have never received a salary for acting; that is, who have never received any payment for their services, or continuous fees other than an isolated expenses fee." This definition, Mr. Fraser said, automatically ruled out from any festival or competition anybody who had ever in his life "walked on" at a theatre. The Birmingham Federation would be satisfied if by any suitable form of words the door could be opened more widely to bona-fide amateurs who had had the misfortune to receive a fee from time to time.

The resolution was opposed by Mr. J. E. Bourn, of the Wolverhampton Student Players—a society which he described as one of the newest and feeblest in the League. The present rule had served to keep out many people with axes to grind, and left the societies amateur in the strictest sense of the term.

Mr. Holford Knight said he thought the existing rule much too drastic, and suggested that the proposal from Birmingham should be given a trial.

Mr. Slater (Stockport Garrick Society) and Mr. Sladen Smith (Unnamed Society) supported the resolution. Miss Pakington suggested an amendment, which was seconded by Mr. Smith, that the words "habitually earn his living" should be changed to "does not derive the bulk of his income from the professional stage."

On being put to the vote, the amendment was not carried.

Another amendment was proposed:

That the Central Committee should be asked to revise their definition of an amateur so as to harmonize it with the spirit of the resolution from Birmingham.

This was accepted by Mr. Fraser, and on being put to the vote was carried, with only two dissentients.

3. Mr. Fraser, seconded by Miss E. M. Jones, then moved:

That in dramatic competitions or festivals organized by the British Drama League for amateur societies the producers concerned shall be unpaid, and shall be amateurs within the terms of the League's definition of that word.

Mr. Fraser argued that it should be as much the object of the amateur movement to produce producers as to produce actors and actresses.

Mr. Sladen Smith, though sympathizing with the object of the motion, said that the movement was perpetually producing first-class whole-time jobs without the money to pay for them, and he saw no hope for the movement unless it could pay some

of the devoted people who were giving their lives to it.

Mr. Purdom contended that amateurs were unable to carry out the work of the producer effectively, because they had not the time for it. Producing a play was a full-time job. The number of good producers in the London professional theatres could be counted on the fingers of one hand; the really first-class—the great producers—well, they might be counted on one thumb. If that was so on the professional stage, what could they expect among amateurs?

Miss Pickersgill (Fellowship Players, Worthing, and W.E.A., Horsham) stated that she produced professionally for the two bodies she represented, and she thought it would be very difficult to carry out the resolution.

Mr. Smith (Altrincham Garrick Society) stated that his Society started ten years ago with a paid producer, and that he would be opposed to the resolution.

The Chairman pointed out the desirability of obtaining the best standard possible, and suggested that on this ground it would be a mistake to debar professional producers from helping amateurs.

The resolution, on being put to the vote, was defeated by a large majority.

Motion moved by Mr. Ahier (The Huddersfield Thespians):

That this Conference strongly recommends the Council of the B.D.L. to issue an Annual Year-Book to contain, amongst other items of information, the names and Secretaries of all Affiliated Societies in the B.D.L.

In moving this resolution, Mr. Ahier stated that the only means of obtaining the names and addresses of Secretaries of Societies was the round-about way through the British Drama League Office, and he considered that the time had arrived when a properly constituted Year-Book should be prepared with the names and addresses of the Secretaries. It might also have Conference Reports, the Rules of the League, etc.

This resolution was seconded by Mr. Crowther. Mr. Rea enquired as to whether such a booklet could be sold for 2s. 6d., in order to defray the cost, which would probably be about £100. This was thought possible.

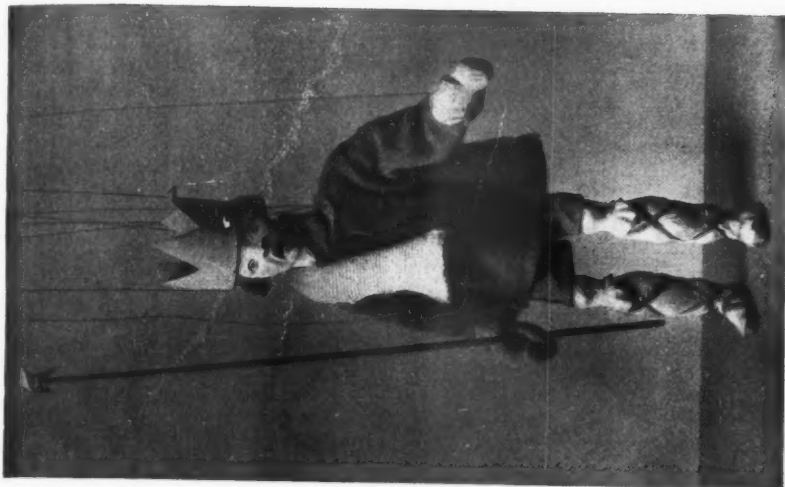
The Chairman suggested that names and addresses could be added to the list of Societies already printed annually in DRAMA.

The question was raised and discussed as to whether it was wise to publish the names and addresses of Secretaries.

Dr. Peach proposed an amendment, which was seconded by Miss Pickersgill:

That names and addresses of members and secretaries should be issued privately to all members and Affiliated Societies of the British Drama League.

Dr. Peach's amendment was accepted by Mr. Ahier, and carried unanimously.



THE KING WITH THE STAR

MARIONETTES BY PAUL BRANN, OF THE
MARIONETTE THEATRE, MUNICH



JOSEPH AND MARY, WITH THE HOLY CHILD



THE BIRDS' WASHING DAY. FROM HILDA SPENCER
WATSON'S BALLET FANTASY "THE NEST." FIRST
PRODUCED IN SWANAGE AND LATER AT THE
STUDIO THEATRE, KENSINGTON

AUTUMN CONFERENCE MINUTES

AFTERNOON SESSION.

4. Report from the Amateur Fee Committee:

Mr. Whitworth reminded those present that at the Conference in London Mr. Granville-Barker had promised that the Council should set up a Committee to deal with the question of authors' fees. This Committee had drawn up a report, which was in the hands of those present, and he called upon Dr. Peach to sponsor the scheme.

Dr. Peach said that the League for some time had considered that play-producing Societies suffered certain injustices under the flat-rate system. The difficulty was to draw up a scheme fair alike to the small Societies, the larger Societies, and the authors. In addition to the projected sliding scale of royalties, the Committee proposed a way to meet the difficulty hitherto experienced by authors and their agents in collecting fees under the royalty system from amateur Societies. It was proposed that Societies contracting-in under the scheme should pay a guinea a year to the British Drama League, which, without further charge, would collect the fees and hand them to the authors or their agents.

Mr. Crowther (Huddersfield Thespians) stated that as a member of the Committee, and as the mover of the original resolution, he would like to emphasize the advantages which Societies would derive when giving several performances of one play. He observed that Mr. Ashley Dukes and Mr. St. John Ervine had said that single performances were no use to them as authors; what they wanted was a run of several performances. This scheme, he thought, would encourage Societies to give a run of performances. But it must be recognized that many plays now in the hands of firms such as Messrs. French would not be immediately available under the scheme. Authors who were against the League last year, but were now with it, had, unfortunately, signed away their rights, and the prospect of persuading the holders of those rights to adopt a more reasonable attitude was Utopian, unless the scheme turned out so successful that they were starved into submission. Going on to suggest the possibility of a boycott of authors who declined to accept the new proposal, Mr. Crowther maintained that the Societies need have no fear of being unable to build up a good programme without them.

Mr. Sladen Smith said that as an author he thought the scheme admirable. But as a producer he was impressed by the high percentages which were proposed as royalties, in comparison with the 5 per cent. for one-act plays, and 7½ per cent. for three-act plays, with a minimum of 30s., which were proposed in the League's scheme of some years ago. There had been very little difficulty in getting permission from authors to produce their plays on the basis of 7½ per cent.

Another delegate read a list of well-known authors who had given his Society the right to give their plays on a 2½ per cent. royalty basis.

The Chairman informed Mr. Sladen Smith that though the earlier scheme did win over a number of authors, that number was evidently not enough, for members of the League continually complained

of authors refusing to accept those terms. For that reason they were now attempting to suggest a better bargain for the author.

Miss Pakington suggested that the Society of Authors was unlikely to accept a scheme which did not stipulate for a minimum fee.

The Chairman replied that the absence of a minimum from the scheme was in part counter-balanced by the higher royalties it was now proposed to pay on small productions.

A question was asked concerning the paragraph in the report: "When two or more performances of the same play are given within the space of seven days, and the gross takings exceed £40, the percentage on the excess may be calculated upon the receipts as a whole." Did this refer to the excess above £40 on each separate performance, or to the excess on the whole run? Dr. Peach thought the former interpretation was correct, but Mr. Ahier the latter. The Chairman explained that after Dr. Peach had left the last meeting of the Committee, it had been decided that the sense should be that indicated by Mr. Ahier.

The approval of the report in this sense was moved by the Rev. Harold Hastings, and seconded by Mr. Hill, and carried unanimously.

Mr. Ahier proposed, Mr. Pennington seconded, and it was recommended that a clause should be inserted to the effect that the scheme should not be applied to charitable performances.

5. Election of New Central Committee for the National Festival of Community Drama:

The Chairman reported that he regretted to state that Mr. Sharman, owing to pressure of business, was obliged to resign from the Central Committee. This left one vacancy, the other members at present being Mr. F. E. Doran and Mr. C. B. Purdom, besides the two nominated by the Council of the League and the Secretaries of the six Areas.

Mr. Ahier (Huddersfield Thespians) moved the re-election of Mr. F. E. Doran and Mr. C. B. Purdom. Mr. Fraser (Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation) seconded, and the motion was carried unanimously.

After asking for nominations for the vacant seat on the Committee, the Chairman proposed Mr. Ivor Brown, and he was elected unanimously.

6. Proposal from Mr. Plumstead in regard to publicity for Amateur Productions in DRAMA:

Mr. Whitworth stated that in Mr. Plumstead's absence he had been asked to put before the Conference the suggestion that announcements of forthcoming amateur productions should be inserted in DRAMA.

Mr. Hirst (Secretary of the North-Western Area) seconded the proposal, it being understood that a small charge would be made.

A question was asked by Mr. Sladen Smith as to the source of the items in "News from North and South." It was explained that these were generally sent by the Societies concerned, though in London it was possible to send a critic to some of the performances.

The proposal was finally passed, and the Editor

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of DRAMA was asked to draw up a scheme whereby the announcements of amateur productions could be inserted in DRAMA at cost price.

Other Business :

7. Invitation for next year's Conference :

The Chairman stated that three invitations had been received for the Conference in 1928, from Sheffield, Welwyn, and Hull. The letter from Mr. Sheppard, of Hull, was read.

Mr. Slater (Stockport Garrick Society) suggested that as Mr. Sheppard had very kindly extended the invitation to 1928, or any other year, that Hull might be visited at a later date.

Mr. Fraser (Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Society) moved, and Mr. Ahier seconded, that the invitation from Sheffield should be accepted.

Mr. Purdom was asked if he would be good enough to renew his invitation for another year, and this he very kindly consented to do.

8. Proposal for the Postponement of the date of the Festival :

Mr. Hirst stated that he would like a record of opinion from this Conference as to the date of the Festival. He had found it very inconvenient to hold the Area Festival before Christmas, and he thought that it would result in an increase in the number of competitors if the date could be postponed for a month or more. The Liverpool Playgoers' Club were in favour of this postponement.

It was unanimously decided that the Central Festival Committee should be asked to arrange for the Area Finals to be held as late as possible.

Proposal from Manchester Playgoers' Club :

The following resolution as proposed by Miss Horne (Manchester Playgoers' Club) :

That the Council of the British Drama League consider the advisability of establishing a branch organization for the North of England, with Manchester as a centre, to engender a keener interest in the work of the British Drama League in the more remote districts, and to provide a central clearing-house for all dramatic efforts in the district.

In view of the late hour, it was decided that consideration of this proposal should be deferred.

In closing the Conference, the Chairman proposed a very hearty vote of thanks to the Manchester Playgoers for their hospitality to the Delegates.

Mr. Miller, in replying to the vote of thanks, stated what a pleasure it had been to welcome the League, and suggested that an associate fellowship to the Drama League should be formed.

The meeting then closed.

On the Saturday evening delegates were present at a Triple Bill, given in the Conference hall by the Manchester Athenæum Dramatic Society, the Altrincham Garrick Society and the W.F.A. Manchester Branch, Dramatic Society. On the Sunday The Unnamed Society invited the delegates to a most pleasant afternoon of five plays at their Little Theatre. Many delegates attended the special service at the Cathedral on the Sunday morning when the Dean officially welcomed them.

CIVIC THEATRE AMBITIONS

Reprinted, by permission, from the *Evening News*, November 16, 1927.

The case for the establishment of a Civic Theatre is quite consistently urged in the report presented by the Playgoers' Club of Manchester at the British Drama League Conference in that City.

The Committee dismiss the idea of another Gaiety. They found that such an enterprise would not meet the full needs of a civic theatre, but would have to be run on commercial lines as building values and overhead charges would preclude the prospect of a continuous policy of production on the highest standards, and would impede the proper development of a real civic theatre adequately meeting the artistic and cultural needs of a population aggregating 700,000.

Manchester has a reasonable claim to make its voice heard in any movement affecting the art of the drama. In modern times it established a school of its own, and it has traditions that reflect creditably on its citizens. Moreover, it is one of the few provincial centres that have gone in seriously for production. The scheme suggested by the Club, ambitious as it is, may therefore be worthy of the closest consideration. It is to the effect that their Civic Theatre should be the artistic centre of the City and should be provided equally by the Corporation and the public, with reversion to the Corporation of the real estate after a period of years. One of the essentials of the scheme is that when once the site and building have been conveyed to the trustees, who are to be representative of the municipal authorities, and the subscribers, the theatre must be self-supporting and show a surplus at a triennial audit.

The method by which the promoters hope to attain their object is well within the bounds of reason. They point out that some years ago the Corporation were prepared to consider offering a site to Sir Thomas Beecham for an Opera House, but the project fell through. They now suggest that the site be offered for a Civic Theatre on condition that the cost of the building and the working capital be raised by public subscription. It is not easy to conceive how such a suggestion could be refused, for the theatre would have little less value from the national point of view than an Opera House.

It is reassuring to learn that the proposed Civic Temple of the Drama is not intended to compete with existing theatres, as it would produce plays that do not ordinarily come into the programme of the commercially-run house, but which "by reason of its artistic, literary or social value has an audience sufficiently large to justify production for its own sake." It would, at any rate, furnish a means of proving the worth of a play and very often save managers a trip across the Atlantic in order to sample American productions.

This is the opportunity for the supporters of the Municipal Theatre movement to pool their resources and work for its establishment. The offer of a site by the municipality such as the report suggests, would provide a fair basis for operations, and the Drama League, as the outcome of their Conference, would not go far wrong in approaching the City Fathers with a view to its fulfilment.

A NATIONAL THEATRE

The Project Discussed at Manchester

MR. HOLFORD KNIGHT, addressed the Manchester Playgoers' Club on the subject of the National Theatre project, at an after-dinner meeting in the Midland Hotel, which was attended also by a number of the delegates to the annual conference of the British Drama League. The chairman was Dr. Somers.

Mr. Knight is a member of the National Theatre Committee, and he described himself as its *enfant terrible*. He had never ceased, he said, from efforts to induce the Committee to bring about the objects for which it came into existence. After commending the Manchester Playgoers' scheme for a Manchester Civic Theatre, he urged that the National Theatre would not in any way conflict with that ambition. The National Theatre had been before the public for a good many years, and some people were disposed to think that it would remain in that position henceforward. He was not of that opinion; the project was never nearer achievement than at this moment. Eighteen months ago, as his audience would know, a site had been offered free in the central district of London, and accepted. The negotiations for the transfer were now well advanced, but the Committee was still bound by a pledge to the donor of the site not to divulge its situation. On this point Mr. Knight repeated what he had said twelve months ago in the press: that he begged the donor to allow them to state where the site was.

The progress which has been made did not end there however. Supposing by some unforeseen difficulty the negotiations for this site should fail, there was an alternative project for the institution of a National Theatre on the site of the Foundling Hospital in Bloomsbury. He would not propose to buy a site if he could get one for nothing; but in default of the site offered, the Foundling site possessed considerable merits. In addition, there were on foot other projects to which he ought not to refer in public. A special committee had recently been set

up for the purpose of finding other sites suitable for a National Theatre.

In the course of discussion the National Theatre project was criticized by Mr. Ivor Brown, who regretted that he could not share Mr. Knight's enthusiasm. If the committee was discussing alternative sites that did not suggest that Mr. Knight's confidence in the first offer he had mentioned was well founded. Even if a site were given free, the difficulties of finance were still tremendous. He did not believe a really worthy theatre could be built in London and endowed for much less than half a million.

As a resident in London, Mr. Brown went on, he felt very strongly that a national theatre need not be in London. The capital had far better theatrical resources than any other town in the country. If the committee could immediately raise half a million let us by all means have the national theatre as a gesture. But London's need was not the greatest, and he hoped that the national theatre project would not divert effort from the building up of civic and community theatres all over the country.

Mr. Knight, in reply to Mr. Brown, claimed that the Committee's action in taking account of alternative sites in case the first should fail was evidence that it meant business. He insisted firmly that the National Theatre should be situated in the capital, and repeated that the project would not conflict at all with the establishment of civic and community theatres throughout the country.

The Director of the St. Pancras People's Theatre, London, writes to say that she has a vacancy for a lady with some dramatic training, with special interest in costume work. She should be a practical person. Preference will be given to one able to play for dancing. A small salary is offered to start with.

'The Sport of Kings' was given recently at the Byfleet Village Hall. The hall was filled to capacity on both evenings, and the audiences were unstinted in their praise of the local players' interpretation of this popular farce.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

SCOTTISH NATIONAL THEATRE SOCIETY

The complex organization of committees that govern the destinies of the Scottish National Players decided to open the winter season on October 11, with "Weir of Hermiston." This play has been adapted from an unfinished novel by Robert Louis Stevenson, from which Mr. A. W. Yuill has produced a play of sorts in four acts. Unless it be that "Weir," when last produced, proved financially successful, and is therefore regarded as "sound" from the box office point of view, it is difficult to know why this play was selected. In common with most adaptations, it is episodic, the wheels of drama revolve too slowly and creak to high heaven. The majority of characters are creations of the stage, not even pale simulacra of reality. But in Lord Hermiston, the grim hanging judge, Mr. Yuill has created a remarkable character. Hermiston, as his house-keeper, Kirsty, tells us in the first act, watching his wife die, was moved to pity, and saw her pass to a happier world with the single sympathetic comment, "Puir bitch."

The play had a good reception from a good house. The next production by the Players will be "Britain's Daughter," by Gordon Bottomley, and in this play one hopes that the Society will have material more worthy of their metal.

ETLINGER THEATRE SCHOOL

Two Dramatic Scholarships will be awarded at the Etlinger Theatre School by Miss Irene Hentschel. For full particulars, apply to the Secretary, 60 Paddington Street, W.1.

NORTHERN DRAMA LEAGUE

The Northern Drama League opened its fifth season in Belfast on November 4 and 5 with performances of Tchekov's "The Cherry Orchard." This curiously inconsequent-seeming play wanders along so naturally that this very life-like quality of it makes it difficult for amateurs to get hold of. In spite of this, and of the cramped stage space (the League's Old Man of the Sea), the production was thoroughly convincing and successfully held the audiences. These Cherry Orchard people, for all their foolishness and stupidity, are a likable lot, and it was a pity that one or two of the minor parts were so inadequately played as to mar somewhat the good quality of the production as a whole. Apart from these, the cast was, to say the least of it, thoroughly competent. Professor H. O. Meredith was the producer.

HUDDERSFIELD THESPIANS

For its opening production of the present season, the Society had the honour of the first presentation of a revised version of "Berkeley Square," by John L. Balderstone and J. C. Squire, a play which in its original form had a very successful run at St. Martin's Theatre, London. Although well acted and well staged, the play did not appeal to a considerable proportion of the audience, probably on account of long

and tedious dialogue and of multiplication of incidents to illustrate one feature of the theme. As the entry in the National Festival of Dramatic Art, the Society presented the Cockney comedy, "In the Park," by Gilbert Cannan, at an invitation performance, at which the judges were in attendance. J. R. Gregson's "Young Imeson" is having a number of revivals in neighbouring towns, and in November the Society is presenting John Masefield's "The Tragedy of Nan."

L. A. C.

THE MEDWAY THEATRE CLUB

A new Amateur Dramatic Society, calling itself the Medway Theatre Club, has recently been formed at Maidstone. At the inaugural meeting the President of the new Club, Mr. B. J. Benson, stated that the name of the Club had been chosen to indicate that their ultimate aim was a theatre—not a theatre belonging to the Club, but one formed with their help, and one which would be leased to them. A programme of two dramatic readings was selected for the first season, and a suggestion was made that they should enter for the National Festival of Community Drama. Other suggestions, made directed to the furthering of the club spirit, were that Club visits should be made to provincial productions of special interest, as well as to those of local amateurs, and that there should be social evenings with one-act plays, music and dancing.

HEBDEN BRIDGE

The Hebdon Bridge Literary and Scientific Society, Dramatic Sub-section, announce the performances of Gogol's "The Government Inspector," in the Co-operative Hall, Hebdon Bridge, on December 6, 7, 9, and 10.

CITY LITERARY INSTITUTE

In these days of small vogue for poetical plays upon our professional stage, it is pleasant, occasionally, to see the amateurs supplying the deficiency; and I got genuine pleasure from the performance of "Paolo," by the City Players—a play which I had not seen since its last revival at the St. James Theatre. Stephen Phillips' dramatic poem will by no means play itself. Its drama, and its music, alike have to be worked for; and the company are to be commended for the quantity of both that they got into it.

The strongest member of the cast was Mr. F. M. Smith, whose Paolo revealed possession of a good voice and presence, and a feeling for the speaking of verse. He is far better on short speeches, with action, than on long ones without, such as "thrilling from Rimini," and the sequel which he rather let down. Let him cultivate stronger monologue, and, especially, let him beware of affectation. His Francesca was charmingly played by Miss Edith Yule, who looked well, and conveyed just the right quality of child-like, almost spiritual, innocence and affection. PERCY ALLAN

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